

INTEROFFICE MEMO



County of San
Bernardino

DATE: May 29, 2003

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FROM: CAROL L. ANSELM
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for Human Services System

TO: HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SUBJECT: HSS LAYOFFS

This report is in response to questions and concerns raised at the May 20, 2003 meeting of the Board of Supervisors regarding the practices employed by the Human Services System (HSS) in determining the type and number of personnel layoffs. The questions and concerns raised were:

- When did the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) know that layoffs were imminent?
- Were employees who took voluntary demotions from Employment Services fully informed of the risks of such action and the potential for layoffs in DCSS?
- If all counties received CalWORKs incentive dollars, why were they not laying off employees?
- Why are Employment Services Workers and not Eligibility Workers being laid off?
- Were HSS employees adequately informed about pending layoffs and were support services offered?
- Were reductions in management, administrative and supervisory classes commensurate with reductions in line staff?

Responses to these specific questions follow.

When did the Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) know that layoffs were imminent?

As of November, 2002, the State DCSS was still encouraging San Bernardino DCSS to continue an aggressive hiring program. In January, 2003, the Governor's budget contained information regarding a proposed 5.5% reduction in child support administration. However, State DCSS delayed the release of allocation letters as they were exploring the idea of equity adjustments for some counties, particularly Los Angeles and San Bernardino. The decision to proceed with filling the child support officer class with transfers/demotes was made in January, 2003. It was not until

March 27, 2003 that State DCSS indicated equity adjustments would not be granted. The planning allocation was not received until April 25, 2003. **Attachment I** contains a more in-depth discussion of the chronology of events leading up to the decision to reduce DCSS staff.

Were employees who took voluntary demotions from Employment Services fully informed of the risks of such action and the potential for layoffs in DCSS?

Every effort was made to provide employees with information to make informed decisions regarding their jobs in light of our certainty that layoffs would occur. A county web site was established in January 2003 to answer questions regarding the layoff process, transfers, voluntary demotes, bumping rights, etc. **Attachment II-A** is a memo from Linda Haugan, Transitional Assistance Department Director, outlining the process for reassignment and transfer. The memo states that job changes that are not lateral require the employee to meet with Human Resources to determine the effect on the employee's status. **Attachment II-B** is an email to JESD management again stating, in the last paragraph, the need for employees to consult with Human Resources for any job change that was not lateral. **Attachment III** is a description of the process used by DCSS to accept voluntary demotes. Each voluntary demote employee was told that there were no guarantees that they would not be affected in any potential layoff situation. Each employee was informed of what rights they would lose by voluntarily demoting and signed a voluntary demotion form agreeing that they were aware of the impact. **Attachment IV** is a copy of the voluntary demotion form.

If all counties received CalWORKs incentive dollars, why were they not laying off employees?

Many counties have been affected by the state budget situation and the loss of CalWORKs incentive dollars. **Attachment V** is a brief summary of news articles regarding layoffs in other counties. Similar to San Bernardino, counties are reducing vacant positions, freezing hiring and laying off staff. It is important to note that San Bernardino's layoffs are not only due to loss of incentive funds, but also because of increased MOU costs, retirement costs, and workers compensation costs.

Why are Employment Services workers and not Eligibility workers being laid off?

Eligibility Workers have not been hired since January 2002. The attrition rate for Eligibility Workers is twice that of Employment Services Workers. In addition, JESD continued to hire Employment Services Workers through June 2002. This combination of hiring and low attrition made it necessary to layoff more Employment Services Workers. However, the transition analysis of caseloads and workload indicate that even with reduced staff, employment efforts on behalf of CalWORKs recipients will not be diminished.

Were HSS employees adequately informed about pending layoffs and were support services offered?

Every effort was made to keep HSS employees (and JESD employees prior to the transition) aware of the potential for layoffs due to the State budget. Informing sessions began as early as November, 2002. A web site for employee questions was established (**Attachment VI**). A number

of Employee Options sessions were conducted prior to the layoff notices being issued. These were large group sessions available to all HSS employees to attend. Human Resources staff was made available to answer individual questions regarding layoff process, employment options, retirement, and benefits, including health insurance should layoffs become necessary. These sessions included SBPEA representatives. Employee Information sessions will continue through June 2, 2003 **(Attachments VII and VIII)**. A complete chronology of layoff related activities is contained in **Attachment IX**. JESD has assisted affected employees through the scheduling of two job fairs exclusively for their benefit.

Were reductions in management, administrative and supervisory classes commensurate with reductions in line staff?

Attachments X – A through D provide a picture of all reductions by department by employee class with a summary of the layoff-affected departments. This report includes reductions by elimination of vacant positions, transfers, layoffs and attrition. As a whole, reductions were within a few percentage points across all classes. The professional class was less affected as funding for Children's Services has not been substantially reduced. Decisions as to which positions to reduce were based on the director's decisions about what activities and mandates were most important to maintain funding and meet state and federal requirements.

I believe HSS has been conservative in its analysis of budgetary impacts and has been open and supportive of our employees. The decision to lay off staff was difficult and not taken lightly. To date, all our efforts to mitigate the layoffs have resulted in the layoff number declining from 218 to 190. It is our hope this number declines further by June 27 as a result of the efforts to find these employees other jobs both inside and outside the County.

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cc: Wally Hill, CAO

Attachments